

Sumu Furukawa #81  
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Q: Mr. Furukawa?

A: Yes.

Q: What were you doing on December 7th, 1941?

A: Well, I was ready to go out and play baseball with my buddies. We waited and waited and my friend never showed up. Now we knew why afterwards.

Q: Uh huh.

A: Then, it looked like some maneuvers were going on.

Q: Where you living at the time?

A: I was living in Kalihi at that time. This is about how many miles away from Pearl... oh several miles I suppose, and we heard all the rumors. But then we heard the Webley Edwards on the radio saying this is the real McCoy. So...

Q: That sticks in your mind, huh?

A: Yes. Yes. But, I wanted to see what was going on so I climbed the telephone pole right in front of our house.

Q: Uh huh.

A: ... and looked towards Pearl. Saw airplanes flying, smoke coming up. We couldn't see the ships. Not from our place, or anything. Just what we could see in the sky above Pearl.

Q: Could you see any planes flying around?

A: Yes. Yes...going all around. But we didn't know what was going on. We didn't see any bombing, or hear any.

Q: Did you see any planes flying over Kalihi area?

A: Uh, yes, I'd say overhead and towards the ocean they flew over. But uh...

Q: Were they flying low enough that you could see any kind of identifying marks?

A: Uh, we couldn't tell at that point. Uh... I know now in looking back, they weren't P-40's though.

Q: Not too many of them got up.

A: We didn't see the "meatballs" you might say. But afterwards when we found out it was the real thing, well, that was something else.

Q: How did you spend that evening?

A: Uh, at home, in the dark. It was a "black out" and we went to the neighbors house, I guess just to be with the people, and they were of part Hawaiian ancestry.

Q: Were there any special measures that you took for the "black out"?

A: Uh, I don't know if we started that night or not, but we had to get curtains and black out the windows, so that no light would show. I think by the next night we did all that.

Q: You were mentioning to me before that you were an ROTC student, ROTC cadet at the University.

A: Yes. Yes. We were told to report to the University. I didn't know about so I didn't go, but when I found out about it, I went the first thing the next morning. Because many went that morning, but I didn't know so I went as soon as I knew.

Q: Were you given any kind of equipment?

A: Yes, uh.... we had the Springfield from the ROTC class, with bullets.

Q: Given any helmet or anything like that?

A: No helmet, but I think we had a ... I think by then gas masks were issued, through all the ... through the populous anyway.

Q: Uh huh...

A: But uh, let's see, the Springfield and an ammo belt. No, I don't recall getting a helmet... and that's about it.

Q: What kind of duty was your ROTC Unit assigned too?

A: The main function was the guard the vital installations on Oahu: water, pumping stations, telephone installations, and that sort of thing. So we were assigned to guard these places on Oahu.

Q: Do you remember which installations you guarded?

A: Yes, one in McCully. A Hawaiian Telephone sub-station. There was another time we guarded the pumping station up in Kalihi Valley, then an overpass at Hawaiian Pineapple company. Those are places I remember and different places in downtown such as, Lewers and Cooke Building.

Q: Now the ROTC. Was the ROTC Unit part of the Hawaii Territorial Guard?

A: Uh, yes, the members of the ROTC, became a part of the Territorial Guard, obvious to who volunteered I suppose.

Q: Now, were you folks pretty nervous on guard duty? I mean, what I'm getting at is the I read that there's a... was a lot of tension and a lot of uncertainty in those days, and uh...

A: Yes, I suppose. We didn't know what was going on. But uh, now thinking back, although gee uh... I wasn't that scared about an attack of the installation somehow. They were all... let's see, fences were put all around these installations. So it would be difficult for anyone to get in. And I just didn't think anyone would try too, sabotage an installation anyway.

Q: Were you given any instructions on what your Unit would be doing in case of a invasion of Oahu?

A: Gee I don't remember. I don't think so. Our job was simply to prevent sabotage rather than fight off any enemy attack.

Q: Uh huh. Now, later on, about a couple of months later...

A: Yes.

Q: ...when the Japanese-Americans who were in the Hawaii Territorial Guard were demobilized...

A: Yes.

Q: ... how did you get that news?

A: We were told to report to camp out at.... oh, we were at camp at KoKo Head and we were brought into the Armory, all the Nisei's were there and Major.... oh, I forget his name now but it'll come to me shortly, told us the news at that time. He said it was a dirty shame but that we were going to be inactivated. So it was a low point. It was an awful feeling.

Q: Yeah. Must have been. What did you do after that? after demobilization?

A: After that I felt that I should do something for the Country; War efforts or... I obtained work with the USED, or Hawaii Dredging. USED I guess it was. Surprisingly, I did some work at Hickam Field.

Q: What kind of work did you do over there?

A: I was doing some carpentry apprentice work.

Q: Uh huh.

A: Construction.

Q: What kind of projects were you working on?

A: We were building some ammo uh.... housing I guess you might call it.

Q: Mmm Hmm.

A: We were supposed to be restricted but yet somehow we were working in that area. I worked until I found out that there was another organization with all these University boys (ROTC) started this VVV. I think that Ted Tsukiyama told you something about that.

Q: Yeah. He told me something about that.

A: So when I heard about it, then I left my work there and volunteered for the VVV [*Varsity Victory Volunteers*]. They're out of Schofield so that's where I went.

Q: Well, why don't you tell me a little bit about that uh... what kind of... well, where were you housed?

A: We were housed right around with the 3rd or 4th Engineer barracks; same as the rest of the GI's there. We had our own mess hall, barracks; same except we had no guns. We were civilians. We were attached to the 3rd and 4th Engineers, and we did all kind of labor work; building roads, ditches, other oh ice boxes... reefers I guess they called them. Things like that, but really just putting on a show you know.

Q: What was the pay like that you got?

A: Pay was labor rate; maybe \$60 a month. We got issued a raise over what... a year or a year and a half maybe we were there.

Q: Would you say that there was an awareness among the men in the VVV that as AJA's you were very much in the spotlight so to speak in your work out at Schofield?

A: So to speak, and yet funny I suppose is our letters were saturated. We could not tell where we were...

Q: Oh really?

A: ... so to speak, yeah. But yet we go home we tell our family and friends where we are.

Q: So, did you get... was it a situation where you got regular liberty?

A: Oh, it came out that finally we had Sunday off. We used to stagger the days but it was easier just to have one day off then

so Sunday was off. We worked Monday through Saturday, and those who were at home on Oahu went home. Many stayed back, from the outside Islands anyway.

Q: How long did you spend in the VVV?

A: Probably, let's see, December.... about a year I'd say. Then Hung Wai Ching (I think you heard of him) came by and told us that we were given an opportunity to volunteer for the Service, and we had to make a decision whether to continue with the VVV, or inactivate it and be ready to volunteer for the Service. So we voted. By the way, that was interesting. I don't know if it was a matter of record but I remember what the vote was like.

Q: What was it like?

A: It was a momentous time. I thought it was about 2/3 in favor of, you might say, dissolving the VVV and volunteering, and 1/3 voted against it.

Q: Which way did you vote?

A: I voted for it.

Q: For dissolving it?

A: Yes.

Q: What were your reasons for voting that way?

A: Oh, I felt we should do something for the Country.

Q: Mmm Hmm.

A: Prove our loyalty.

Q: And the people who voted against it, what did they give as their reasons?

A: Well, one was we felt that doing what we were was alright. We wanted to be together. We volunteered. We wanted to be in that service as a unit, but no one could assure us of that. So that was one objection but uh... Some said they had to check with the family first before voting and things like that, so... uh...

Q: So did the VVV volunteer as a unit for the Service or as individuals?

A: As a unit but as individuals. The unit was dissolved, so it was all up to us... each one of us... whether to volunteer or not. But I think almost all did. I don't know about any records being kept but I dare say it was close to 100%.

Q: Did you volunteer?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What happened then?

A: I wasn't accepted because of my health.

Q: What did you do at that point?

A: Then uh... let's see, oh, I found work with the USED again, doing carpentry apprentice work.

Q: What sort of projects did you work on then?

A: Basically things connected with the War. I know we made some sleds.

Q: Some what?

A: Sleds.

Q: Sleds?

A: Yeah, you know, to haul ammo and whatever over on the beaches I guess.

Q: Oh really?

A: Yeah. Then we made houses, barracks, furniture, things like that.

Q: Mmm Hmm.

A: We were working mostly with wood, but...a funny thing was that a lot of the carpenters were Nisei (laughter).

Q: Oh really?

A: In effect they were helping the War (laughter)... effort. So...then I stayed there then it looked like... well, VJ day came around, so I thought well, I guess... or was it VE day first, I'm sorry... came and thereafter I thought oh well maybe I'll go back to school so I left the job and went to school and finished up in 1948

Q: O.K., Well, thank you. I appreciate your taking the time to talk to me.

A: I hope that.... Sorry, I thought there'd be something more dramatic.

Q: No, listen, it's.... every person that gives us something makes a contribution to...

A: Mmm Hmm.